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AUTHOR Briscoe, Richard; Baber, M. Yuette; McPhail, Tracy Lea; Harper, Kimberly

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ABSTRACT

This paper contains summaries of research projects of three graduate students participating in the Multicultural Mental Health Training Program at the University of South Florida's Florida Mental Health Institutes. The students' work involved the development of evaluation or research projects with ethnically diverse minority communities. The first study, "Working Together for the Children: School-Community Partnerships in East Tampa" (M. Yvette Baber), describes the results of a qualitative evaluation of locally based efforts to increase levels of interaction between schools and parents from East Tampa, Florida. The success of the East Tampa School-Community Partnership is described. The second study, "Community-Based Job Service Programs: The First Step toward Community Economic Revitalization" (Tracy Lea McPhail), describes the use of community-based job development efforts to increase economic revitalization. The third study, "Health Information Effectively to Middle-Income African-American Communities" (Kimberly Michelle Harper), describes preferred sources of health information for middle-income African-American families, as well as how health risks are perceived differently among ethnic populations. Each summary contains references. (CR)

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Multicultural Mental Health Training Program: Researcher Projects With Ethnically Diverse Communities

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Introduction

Richard Briscoe, Ph.D.

These summaries present the research projects of three graduate students participating in the Multicultural Mental Health Training Program (MMHTP) at the University of South Florida's, Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI). These students' work involved the development of evaluation or research projects with ethnically diverse minority communities.

The purpose of the MMHTP is to increase the number of ethnic minority mental health professionals in the state. The training program provides students, university and agency staff with practical techniques applicable to mental health service delivery in minority communities (Briscoe, Sedberry, & Henderson, 1996). The National Institute of Mental Health (1991) advised that additional research was needed to support service delivery to minority populations. MMHTP collaborates with the Multicultural Child and Family Project (MCFDP) at the FMHI in developing evaluation, technical assistance and training strategies aimed at improving the effectiveness of innovative community-based neighborhood programs which serve ethnically diverse populations (Briscoe, Wright, & Yang, 1994). Effective interventions with ethnically diverse communities address the cultural values and unique needs of local communities, because ethnic or racial groups differ in their relevant cultural values, norms, expectations, and attitudes (Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). The MCFDP and MMHTP embrace a neighborhood-based approach to delivery of social services, and conceptualize three theoretical orientations which enhance the system of care model's applicability to ethnically diverse populations: (1) neighborhood-driven participation which emphasizes

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natural support networks within the community and democratic participation; (2) primary prevention to promote the well-being of families and communities; and (3) cultural competence on the part of change agents to incorporate the concerns and values of the local residents into effective programming.

An aim of the following research projects was to develop collaborative ties between ethnically diverse communities and the university to increase the effectiveness of service delivery. The first summary examines the strengthening of linkages between the community and schools. National educational goals recognize the importance of partnerships between schools and the home to the educational achievement of children. How these linkages are perceived, created and maintained in a predominantly African-American community was the focus of this dissertation in Applied Anthropology. The second summary reports the development of a community-based job services program. This project involved the coordination of multiagency family career and job placement services to transition low income community residents into improved employment and self sufficiency. The third summary, from a public health perspective, addressed communicating health information effectively to members of middle income African-American communities. This project involved promoting proper management of household hazardous waste to improve indoor air quality and decrease the prevalence of childhood respiratory ailments.

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Working Together for the Children: School-Community Partnerships in East Tampa

M. Yvette Baber, M.A.

Introduction

This report details the results of a qualitative evaluation of a locally-based effort to increase levels of interaction between schools and parents from East Tampa, FL.

Multicultural Community and Family Development Project. The Multicultural Community & Family Development Project (MCFDP) at FMHI has worked with the East Tampa School-Community Partnership (ETSCP) for the past five years to stimulate the development of a coordinated system of parent-school partnerships among the elementary and secondary schools serving the area. This internship assignment was to provide evaluation and professional support services to the East Tampa School-Community Partnership and to assess the ways in which ETSCP has achieved its stated purpose.

East Tampa School-Community Partnership. In the late 1980s, one problem that was evident to the Lee Davis Neighborhood Service Center (LDNSC) and a parent from an elementary school was the disproportionate level of suspensions and expulsions for children who lived in East Tampa. The East Tampa School Children Advocate Committee was formed in 1990 to provide a network of school and community support to address parents' lack of access to their child's school, misconceptions about the community or the School District, and the high levels of disciplinary actions experienced by the children from East Tampa. In 1992, the name of the organization was changed to the East Tampa School-Community Partnership (ETSCP). Each month since then, principals, teachers, parents, school district staff, and social service staff have met to discuss these issues.

The stated purposes of the ETSCP are: 1) to develop a network of concerned citizens to bridge the communication gap between home and school by identifying obstacles to healthy communication in the arena of education, and 2) to develop strategies to increase home-school communication in the arena of education. As the organization nears its fifth full year of operation, it is beginning to examine how it has reached its goals, with a focus on strengthening the Partnership's infrastructure and increasing local parent involvement in its activities.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation Methodology

The assessment of ETSCP was conducted using a multi-method approach. First, a review of the literature related to participation and school involvement in African-American communities was completed. Historical documents were reviewed, and a draft evaluation of the ETSCP (MCFDP, 1995) provided critical statistical information on organizational changes. This effort identified key topics which were discussed, initiatives which were undertaken, and those individuals who had consistently attended the meetings of the organization. An intensive review of the partnership's efforts (January - December 1995) identified its accomplishments for this period. This review produced a picture of an organization staffed completely by volunteers that has consistently worked to bring parents and teachers together for the education of East Tampa's children.

The anthropological focus of the evaluations made participant observation a primary research tool. Intense involvement in general membership meetings and board meetings contributed to an understanding of the dynamics of interaction and communication between members of the partnership, the Hillsborough county school system, and the East Tampa community. In addition to these meetings, the author attended the open parent-school events scheduled at the Lee Davis Neighborhood Service Center or involving the ETSCP (Back-to School Kickoff, Parent Enhancement Conference, Christmas Giving Tree). Individuals who belonged to the ETSCP were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions. These individuals were selected based on their membership in the organization and their willingness to be interviewed. They consisted of community residents, school district staff, principals and assistant principals of partner schools, and social services staff from the Service Center.

Evaluation Findings

The review of records indicated that the ETSCP has, in fact, drawn a diverse group of educators, social service staff, residents and parents together. School and agency information was shared at virtually every meeting, and community concerns were addressed consistently over the past six years. From these efforts, vehicles to link schools and community were created. The Back-to-School Kickoff is an annual event where schools come to the community to meet and provide information to parents, and where children are given school supplies. It has grown from serving 200 people in its first year to almost 1,000 people in 1996. Additionally, the Full Service Schools Program in East Tampa was developed and funded as a result of the efforts of ETSCP members and is now an integral source of school-based services.

There are programs and schools that have also maintained a consistent relationship with ETSCP. The public library, the Tampa Police Department, the LDNSC, the Head Start

Tampa Police Department, the LDNSC, the Head Start Program, and the Tampa Housing Authority have sent representatives to meetings for the past four or five years. There are some schools that have demonstrated a commitment to linkages and working together for the children through their regular participation and involvement. Nine Hillsborough County Schools have sent representatives to meetings on a regular basis since 1991. These schools, and their staff, have been key players in ETSCP's efforts to increase home-school communication.

The number of parents who attend the monthly meetings has also increased over the years, and 1995 showed the most impressive participation. At the beginning of the year, the number of parents varied from 2-5. From July to the end of the year, the numbers increased, and were in the range of 5 - 16 at each meeting. The Partnership is, indeed, bringing schools and parents together to bridge the gaps of communication and cooperation that had, in the past, plagued the East Tampa community.

The individual interviews revealed that the people who have joined the partnership are convinced that it is a valuable organization and that they are better able to serve the children of East Tampa because of its work. School district personnel expressed concern over low levels of parent involvement in the schools, but they were able to experience parent involvement at the community level through Partnership activities. Parents, teachers, and principals all felt that working together on planning committees and at ETSCP events helped them understand each other better. Parents expressed more confidence in approaching school site staff (teachers, counselors, etc.) and reported that they appreciated the opportunities they were given to meet with these people in their own community.

One factor that came up consistently in meeting discussions, interviews, and casual conversations was the impact of district-wide bussing on the relationships between schools and parents. Parents said that they could not easily get to some of the schools that their children attended because of a lack of transportation. Social services and school staff talked about the inability to make a personal connection with parents and the way it affected classroom management, resolution of problems, and support for the school programs. All groups acknowledged the importance of parent-school-community linkages but expressed frustration at finding a way to build those linkages. They saw community-based events as one effective tool to draw parents out and emphasized the need to continue to reach out to the "grass roots" in order to build their trust and participation.

Conclusion

The success of ETSCP continues on its upward spiral - drawing more people to its general meeting and working hard to reinforce the developing linkages between schools

hard to reinforce the developing linkages between schools and the community. The qualitative evaluation of the process of achieving this goal has shown that long-term volunteer efforts can succeed with consistent participation and a continuing focus on the purposes of the organization. The Partnership helps close the gap between schools and residents of an inner-city neighborhood&endash;a gap created by forces beyond the control of either the parent or the schools. Parents and school personnel can meet and work together on projects for the children that are community-based. The school personnel gain an understanding of the environmental realities of their students, and the parents gain confidence in their ability to communicate effectively with the people responsible for the schooling of their children. The Partnership has gained district-wide attention for its efforts, and discussion is now underway about how to develop similar partnerships in other neighborhoods in Hillsborough County, Florida.

Community-based Job Services Programs: The First Step Toward Community Economic Revitalization

Tracy Lea McPhail, M.A.

Introduction

This summary describes the use of community-based job development efforts to initiate economic revitalization.

The issue of welfare reform and the need to economically revitalize certain communities in Tampa prompted the community leaders and concerned faculty at the University of South Florida (USF) to address ways to transition low income welfare recipients toward gainful employment and self-sufficiency. The Center to Develop Communities of Tampa (CDC of Tampa), formerly known as the Lee Davis Neighborhood Development Corporation (LDNDC), has been dedicated to developing and sustaining community enhancement programs for many years. Such programs include the Men to Boys program which pairs successful African-American men with African-American boys who are at risk for developing problems in the community. Another successful program is the East Tampa School-Community Partnership which has been instrumental in opening the lines of communication between school administrators and concerned citizens.

A 1993 Needs Assessment of East Tampa Residents revealed that the respondent's top three needs were jobs, day care, and affordable single family housing. The urgency of these needs prompted several partnerships between the university and community organizations. One such partnership was initiated by Florida Community Opportunity Partnership Center (FCOPC) and Multicultural Child and Family Development Project of the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of South Florida's, Florida Mental Health Institute. These projects at

Florida's, Florida Mental Health Institute. These projects at the USF united with the LDNDC, the Department of Labor and Employment Security (DLES), and the City of Tampa Private Industry Council (PIC) to create "one stop" community-based job development centers. These facilities would serve as a tangible first step in transitioning the unemployed toward self-sufficiency. One-stop job development centers are designed to provide referrals for jobs, vocational training and education. These centers are comprehensive, in that they also address many barriers to sustaining employment such as day care/elder care and transportation.

East Tampa is one of four sites for job development centers. The Job and Education Placement Center (JEPC) is housed within the Lee Davis Neighborhood Development Corporation (LDNDC). The JEPC is designed to address the needs of the unemployed and underemployed residents in the target area. With the help of the aforementioned entities, the JEPC provides many services to their clients. The DLES has set up several job information services terminals which clients use to electronically search for jobs posted by employers in four Florida counties. For clients who are unsure of their career path, the JEPC provides a computerized vocational assessment tool that prompts the clients to answer questions concerning their skills and interests.

In addition to referring clients to area vocational schools, JEPC also offers two job training programs. Job readiness training provides forty hours of customized instruction and hands-on practice designed according to the employer's human resource needs. The Florida Aquarium used JEPC's job readiness training during its initial staffing. The JEPC also offers an employability skills training program. This program consists of weekly courses on issues such as resume writing, interviewing skills, and proper business attire. This training is offered in several locations in East Tampa including the Lee Davis Neighborhood Service Center and various housing developments. When training participants appear to have low self-esteem, the staff conducts motivational exercises before presenting the traditional employability training material. These exercises help the program participants recognize their worth, while identifying the skills they can offer to prospective employers.

After all job searches and job readiness evaluations are completed, the client may be referred to a job or a vocational training facility. If job or education placement occurs, then the JEPC should monitor their clients' progress for 90 days. The current staff capacity at JEPC does not allow for comprehensive monitoring of all clients.

Program Evaluation

Within its first month of operation, JEPC had served 90 clients. All the client demographic data was not available.

clients. All the client demographic data was not available, however simply comparing the responses of the needs assessment to JEPC's client's in its first month of operation shows that JEPC is truly serving a much needed function in the community.

Five months later, more than 350 people have visited the CDC of Tampa office. Of those people, 74 have been placed in jobs, demonstrating a one out of five placement rate. This placement rate is two placements higher than the larger Job and Benefits Offices. The types of jobs vary from janitorial work to mechanical engineering. The types of organizations that have hired clients include GTE Mobilnet, Ametek, USF, and Creative World Day Care.

Jobs and Community Revitalization

When examining the community economics from a macroeconomic perspective, it is clear that jobs are the first steps toward community economic development. Communities like East Tampa are constantly recruiting businesses to locate in their area. Businesses are attracted to a locale's amenity factors such as tax incentives, skilled workers, quality education, quality transportation, and a low crime rate (Kasarda & Irwin, 1991). East Tampa is fertile ground for economic revitalization. As a federally designated enterprise zone, businesses located within the target area receive tax incentives and other perks.

Community-based job centers are a crucial link in improving the amenity factors that can attract businesses to the area. As businesses use the JEPC to find qualified, responsible employees, the residents acquire income that can be spent within the community. Continued efforts to recruit more businesses in the community will help diversify the local industry mix. The revenue from goods and services consumed (and eventually produced) in East Tampa will contribute to the community's economic expansion. The process all begins with jobs (Hindley, 1981; Kasarda & Irwin, 1991).

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Health Information Effectively to Middle-Income African-American Communities

Kimberly Michelle Harper, M.P.H.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of this study was to determine the preferred sources of health information for middle-income African-American families, as well as how health risks are perceived differently among ethnic populations. The health risk example identified for this study was exposure to environmental contaminants, as the condition and quality of one's surrounding environment can have significant influence on physical, mental, and emotional health. The most common exposure to environmental contaminants occurs in our homes with common household products that contain hazardous chemicals. This summary describes this exploratory research's methodological procedures and preliminary implications.

Methods

This study's selected target population, middle-income African Americans, is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in American society. Currently, three out of ten African-American families in the United States have attained middle-income socioeconomic status. Conveying health information effectively to these families should be a primary concern for prevention. To be eligible for this study, participants had to reside in Hillsborough County, live in a single-family dwelling, and have at least one child under the age of ten years old.

This study used direct observations, elite interviews, focus groups, and community surveys to gain information on perceptions and preferred sources of health information, as well as more specific concerns and behaviors related to environmental health Fifteen direct observations estimated product preferences, usage levels, and storage methods. Thirty interviews with community leaders provided insight about the target population; quotes from focus groups also were instrumental in designing preliminary health messages using the cultural cues and values from middle-income African-American parents. Results of these qualitative research methods reflected a range of opinions and concerns, and proved beneficial to preliminary development of community surveys. These surveys were distributed to a sample of 250 homes from six selected neighborhoods in Hillsborough County. The selected neighborhoods were comprised of at least 50% African-American residents, based on 1990 Census data. At least 40% of the households had children present, and at least 40% of the households earn more than $25,000 per year.

So how does this study translate into practical application? Preliminary analysis suggests:

1. With a limited number of ethnic populations utilizing available mental health services, it is imperative to address current health concerns in the marketing of current resources through a focus on the community strengths.
2. Cultural cues and pivotal messages may be slightly

more distinct for such a specific demographic population. Thus, quotes from interviews and surveys may serve to peak the interest when describing available programs.

3. Due to this population's typically strong and constant spiritual beliefs, an avenue of joining forces with a particular religion's or denomination's health ministries may be explored further.

Environmental Psychology Implications

On another level, perceptions of the environment or surroundings may yield a reflection of mental health influences. Nature or environmental experiences can help broaden our sense of the world while deepening our sense of ourselves (Wals, 1994). Qualitative and quantitative findings suggest that those residing in urban ethnic communities, without regard to socioeconomic status, are often exposed to excessive air, water, and soil pollution. A common response is concern for the cumulative impact on their children's health twenty years from now. Door-to-door community surveys revealed shared concerns and emotions that require solution to ensure the stability of future physical and mental health.

Feedback

The community survey data, complemented with qualitative approaches, will provide concrete suggestions and strategies for addressing a distinct ethnic population with multiple community networks throughout the socioeconomic scale within the black community. Feedback to the community is a critical component of any research. In this instance, the community will receive information in the form of data that can be transformed to program ideas, radio talk shows, newspaper articles, and meeting presentations. Based on the information and concerns expressed, an environmental education program can be designed to include topics of most interest to the communities, increasing adults awareness of the impact of environmental contaminants on the family's physical, mental, and psychological health.

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Conclusion

This symposium was intended to highlight the research projects of students participating in the MMHTP in coordination with the MCFDP. These research projects address the overall objective of the MMHTP to improve the quality of services to minority communities through a combination of training, research and treatment services. These minority student researchers are dedicated to understanding and studying the mental health needs of an

increasingly ethnically diverse population. Initially, the MMHTP placed students in community sites to offer treatment services and technical assistance. These current students are combining research and evaluation procedures to improve service delivery within communities. Data collected in these projects involved community-based programs or community residents. The data gathered required formal and informal linkages between community residents and the researchers. The roles of these researcher are viewed as collaborators or partners for successful service delivery. The MMHTP will continue to offer minority students the opportunity to develop research projects and collaborative approaches for improving service delivery with ethnically diverse populations.

Authors

Richard Briscoe, Ph.D.
Department of Child
and Family Studies
Florida Mental Health Institute
University of South Florida
13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612
Voice: 813/974-6413
Fax: 813/974-4406
briscoe@hal.fmhi.usf.edu

M. Yvette Baber, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
(MMHTP Fellow)
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida
4202 E. FL Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33620
baber@luna.cas.usf.edu

Tracy Lea McPhail, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
(MMHTP Fellow)
Department of Organizational/Industrial Psychology
Psychology Department, BEH 339
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Avenue
Tampa, FL 33620-6950
Voice: 813/974-6414
Fax: 813/974-4406
mcphail@luna.cas.usf.edu

Kimberly Harper, M.P.H.
Doctoral Candidate (MMHTP Fellow)
Department of Community
& Family Health
College of Public Health
13201 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC 56
University of South Florida
Voice: 813-974-5222

. Voice: 813-974-5222
Fax: 813-974-4406
cfhst22@koop.usf.edu

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